

[From the Dublin University Magazine.]

MEMOIRS OF THE FIRST DUCHESS OF ORLEANS.

WHILE the fortunes of the last Duchess of Orleans are still in uncertainty, it may not be unpleasing to read something of the family and character of the first princess who bore that title. The retrospect will carry us back to stirring times, and make us acquainted with the virtues and sufferings, as well as the crimes, which mark the family history of the great European houses. The story of Valentina Visconti links the history of Milan with that of Paris, and imparts an Italian grace and tenderness to the French annals. Yet although herself one of the gentlest of women, she was sprung from the fiercest of men. The history of the rise and progress of the family of Visconti is, in truth, one of the most characteristic that the Lombardic annalists have preserved.

The Sforzias, called Visconti from their hereditary office of *Viccomes*, or temporal vicar of the Emperor, were a marked and peculiar race. With the most ferocious qualities, they combined high intellectual refinement, and an elegant and cultivated taste, in all that was excellent in art, architecture, poetry, and classical learning. The founder of the family was Otho, Archbishop of Milan at the close of the 13th century. He extended his vicarial authority into a virtual sovereignty of the Lombard towns, acknowledging only the German Emperor as his feudal lord. This self-constituted authority he transmitted to his nephew Matteo, "Il grande." In the powerful hands of Matteo the Magnificent, Milan became the capital of a virtual Lombard kingdom. Three of the sons of Matteo were successively "tyrants" of Milan, the designation being probably used in its classical, rather than its modern sense. Galeazzo, the eldest, was succeeded by his son Azzo, the only one of the male representatives of the Visconti who exhibited any of the milder characteristics befitting the character of a virtuous prince. Luchino, his uncle and successor, was, however, a patron of learning, and has had the good fortune to transmit his name to us in illustrious company. At his court, in other respects contaminated by vice, and made infamous by cruelty, the poet Petrarch found a home and a munificent patron. Luchino cultivated his friendship. The poet was not above repaying attentions so acceptable by a no less acceptable flattery. Petrarch's epistle, eulogizing the virtues and recounting the glory of the tyrant, remains a humiliating record of the power of wealth and greatness, and the pliability of genius.

Luchino's fate was characteristic. His wife, Isabella of Fieschi, had frequently suffered from his caprice and jealousy; at length she learned that he had resolved on putting her to death. Forced to anticipate his cruel intent, she poisoned him with the very drugs he had designed for her destruction.

Luchino was succeeded by his brother Gio-

vanni, Archbishop of Milan, the ablest of the sons of Matteo. Under his unscrupulous administration the Milanese territory was extended, until almost the whole of Lombardy was brought under the yoke of the vigorous and subtle tyrant. Although an ecclesiastic, he was as prompt to use the temporal as the spiritual sword. On his accession to power, Pope Clement the Sixth, then resident at Avignon, summoned him to appear at his tribunal to answer certain charges of heresy and schism. The papal legate sent with this commission had a further demand to make on behalf of the Pontiff—the restitution of Bologna, a fief of the church, which had been seized by the Milanese prelate, Giovanni Visconti, as well as the cession, by the latter, of either his temporal or spiritual authority, which the legate declared could not be lawfully united in the person of an archbishop. Giovanni insisted that the legate should repeat the propositions with which he was charged at church on the following Sunday: as prince and bishop he could only receive such a message in the presence of his subjects and the clergy of his province. On the appointed day, the archbishop having celebrated high-mass with unusual splendor, the legate announced the message with which he was charged by his Holiness. The people listened in silence, expecting a great discussion. But their astonishment was not greater than that of the legate, when Archbishop Giovanni stepped forth, with his crucifix in one hand, while with the other he drew from beneath his sacerdotal robes a naked sword, and exclaimed, "Behold the spiritual and temporal arms of Giovanni Visconti! By the help of God, with the one I will defend the other."

The legate could obtain no other answer, save that the archbishop declared that he had no intention of disobeying the pontiff's citation to appear at Avignon. He accordingly prepared, indeed, to enter such an appearance as would prevent citations of that kind in future.

He sent, as his precursor, a confidential secretary, with orders to make suitable preparations for his reception. Thus commissioned, the secretary proceeded to hire every vacant house in the city and surrounding neighborhood, within a circuit of several miles; and made enormous contracts for the supply of furniture and provisions for the use of the archbishop and his suite. These astounding preparations soon reached the ears of Clement. He sent for the secretary, and demanded the meaning of these extraordinary proceedings. The secretary replied, that he had instructions from his master, the Archbishop of Milan, to provide for the reception of 12,000 knights and 6,000 foot soldiers, exclusive of the Milanese gentlemen who would accompany their lord when he appeared at Avignon, in compliance with his Holiness's summons. Clement, quite unprepared for such a visit, only thought how he should extricate himself from so great a dilemma. He wrote to the haughty Visconti, begging that he would not put himself to the inconvenience of such a jour-

ney: and, lest this should not be sufficient to deter him, proposed to grant him the investiture of Bologna—the matter in dispute between them—for a sum of money: a proposal readily assented to by the wealthy archbishop.

Giovanni Visconti bequeathed to the three sons of his brother Stefano a well-consolidated power; and, for that age, an enormous accumulation of wealth. The Visconti were the most skillful of financiers. Without overhurling their subjects, they had ever a well-filled treasury—frequently recruited, it is true, by the plunder of their enemies, or replenished by the contributions they levied on neighboring cities. The uniform success which attended their negotiations in these respects, encouraged them in that intermeddling policy they so often pursued. We can scarcely read without a smile the proclamations of their generals to the inoffensive cities, of whose affairs they so kindly undertook the unsolicited management:

"It is no unworthy design which has brought us hither," the general would say to the citizens of the towns selected for these disinterested interventions; "we are here to re-establish order, to destroy the dissensions and secret animosities which divide the people (say) of Tuscany. We have formed the unalterable resolution to reform the abuses which abound in all the Tuscan cities. If we can not attain our object by mild persuasions, we will succeed by the strong hand of power. Our chief has commanded us to conduct his armies to the gates of your city, to attack you at our swords' point, and to deliver over your property to be pillaged, unless (solely for your own advantage) you show yourselves pliant in conforming to his benevolent advice."

Giovanni Visconti, as we have intimated, was succeeded by his nephews. The two younger evinced the daring military talent which distinguished their race. Matteo, the eldest, on the contrary, abandoned himself to effeminate indulgences. His brothers, Bernabos and Galeazzo, would have been well pleased that he should remain a mere cipher, leaving the management of affairs in their hands; but they soon found that his unrestrained licentiousness endangered the sovereignty of all. On one occasion a complaint was carried to the younger brothers by an influential citizen. Matteo Visconti, having heard that this citizen's wife was possessed of great personal attractions, sent for her husband, and informed him that he designed her for an inmate of his palace, commanding him, upon pain of death, to fetch her immediately. The indignant husband, in his perplexity, claimed the protection of Bernabos and Galeazzo. The brothers perceived that inconvenient consequences were likely to ensue. A dose of poison, that very day, terminated the brief career of Matteo the voluptuous.

Of the three brothers, Bernabos was the most warlike and the most cruel; Galeazzo the most subtle and politic. Laboring to cement his power by foreign alliances, he purchased from

John, king of France, his daughter, Isabelle de Valois, as the bride of his young son and heir; and procured the hand of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, son of Edward III. of England, for his daughter Violante. While Galeazzo pursued these peaceful modes of aggrandizement, Bernabos waged successful war on his neighbors, subjecting to the most refined cruelties all who questioned his authority. It was he who first reduced the practice of the torture to a perfect system, extending over a period of forty-one days. During this period, every alternate day, the miserable victim suffered the loss of some of his members—an eye, a finger, an ear—until at last his torments ended on the fatal wheel. Pope after pope struggled in vain against these powerful tyrants. They laughed at excommunication, or only marked the fulmination of a papal bull by some fresh act of oppression on the clergy subject to their authority. On one occasion Urban the Fifth sent Bernabos his bull of excommunication, by two legates. Bernabos received the pontifical message unmoved. He manifested no irritation—no resentment; but courteously escorted the legates, on their return, as far as one of the principal bridges in Milan. Here he paused, about to take leave of them. "It would be inhospitable to permit you to depart," he said, addressing the legates, "without some refreshment; choose—will you eat or drink?" The legates, terrified at the tone in which the compliment was conveyed, declined his proffered civility. "Not so," he exclaimed, with a terrible oath; "you shall not leave my city without some remembrance of me; say, will you eat or drink?" The affrighted legates, perceiving themselves surrounded by the guards of the tyrant, and in immediate proximity to the river, felt no taste for drinking. "We had rather eat," said they; "the sight of so much water is sufficient to quench our thirst." "Well, then," rejoined Bernabos, "here are the bulls of excommunication which you have brought to me; you shall not pass this bridge until you have eaten, in my presence, the parchments on which they are written, the leaden seals affixed to them, and the silken cords by which they are attached." The legates urged in vain the sacred character of their offices of ambassador and priest: Bernabos kept his word; and they were left to digest the insult as best they might. Bernabos and his brother, after having disposed of Matteo, became, as companions in crime usually do, suspicious of one another. In particular, each feared that the other would poison him. Those banquets and entertainments to which they treated one another must have been scenes of magnificent discomfort.

Galeazzo died first. His son, Giovanni-Galeazzo, succeeded, and matched the unscrupulous ambition of his uncle with a subtlety equal to his own. Not satisfied with a divided sway, he maneuvered unceasingly until he made himself master of the persons of Bernabos and his two sons. The former he kept a close prisoner

for seven months, and afterward not to death by poison. The cruelty and pride of Beraabos had rendered him so odious to his subjects, that they made no effort on his behalf, but submitted without opposition to the milder government of Giovanni-Galeazzo. He was no less successful in obtaining another object of his ambition. He received from the Emperor Wenceslaus the investiture and dokedom of Milan, for which he paid the sum of 100,000 florins, and now saw himself undisputed master of Lombardy.

The court of Milan, during such a period, seems a strange theatre for the display of graceful and feminine virtues. Yet it was here, and under the immediate eye of her father, this very Giovanni-Galeazzo, that Valentina Visconti, one of the most amiable female characters of history, passed the early days of her eventful life. As the naturalist culls a wild flower from the brink of the volcano, the historian of the dynasty of Milan pauses to contemplate her pure and graceful character, presenting itself among the tyrants, poisoners, murderers, and infidels who founded the power and amassed the wealth of her family. It would be sad to think that the families of the wicked men of history partook of the crimes of their parents. But we must remember that virtue has little charm for the annalist; he records what is most calculated to excite surprise or awake horror, but takes no notice of the unobtrusive ongoings of those who live and die in peace and quietness. We may be sure that among the patrons of Petrarch there was no want of refinement, or of the domestic amenities with which a youthful princess, and only child, ought to be surrounded. In fact, we have been left the most permanent and practical evidences of the capacity of these tyrants for the enjoyment of the beautiful. The majestic cathedral of Milan is a monument of the noble architectural taste of Valentina's father. In the midst of donjons and fortress-palaces it rose, an embodiment of the refining influence of religion; bearing in many respects a likeness to the fair and innocent being whose fortunes we are about to narrate, and who assisted at its foundation. The progress of the building was slow; it was not till a more magnificent usurper than any of the Visconti assumed the iron-crown of Lombardy, in our own generation, that the general design of the Duomo of Milan was completed. Many of the details still remain unfinished; many statues to be placed on their pinnacles; some to be replaced on the marble stands from which they were overthrown by the cannon of Radetski. Of the old castle of the Visconti two circular towers and a curtain wall alone remain: its court-yard is converted into a barrack, its moats filled up, its terraced gardens laid down as an esplanade for the troops of the Austrian garrison. The family of the Visconti have perished. Milan, so long the scene of their glory, and afterward the battle-ground of contending claimants, whose title was derived through them, has ceased to be the capital of a free and powerful Italian state: but the Cathedral, after a growth

of nearly four centuries, is still growing; and the name of the gentle Valentina, so early associated with the majestic Gothic edifice, "smells sweet, and blossoms in the dust."

The year after the foundation of the Duomo, Valentina Visconti became the bride of Louis Duke of Orleans, only brother to the reigning monarch of France, Charles VI. Their politic father, the wise King Charles, had repaired the disasters occasioned by the successful English invasion, and the long captivity of John the Second. The marriage of Valentina and Louis was considered highly desirable by all parties. The important town of Asti, with an immense marriage portion in money, was bestowed by Giovanni-Galeazzo on his daughter. A brilliant escort of the Lombard chivalry accompanied the "promessa sposa" to the French frontier.

Charles VI. made the most magnificent preparations for the reception of his destined sister-in-law. The weak but amiable monarch, ever delighting in fêtes and entertainments, could gratify his childish taste, while displaying a delicate consideration and brotherly regard for Louis of Orleans. The marriage was to be celebrated at Melun. Fountains of milk and choice wine played to the astonishment and delight of the bourgeois. There were jousts and tournaments, masks, and banquets, welcoming the richly-dowered daughter of Milan. All promised a life of secured happiness; she was wedded to the brave and chivalrous Louis of Orleans, the pride and darling of France. He was eminently handsome; and his gay, graceful, and affable manners gained for him the strong personal attachment of all who surrounded him. But, alas! for Valentina and her dream of happiness, Louis was a profligate; she found herself, from the first moment of her marriage, a neglected wife: her modest charms and gentle deportment had no attractions for her volatile husband. The early years of her wedded life were passed in solitude and uncomplaining sorrow. She bore her wrongs in dignified silence. Her quiet endurance, her pensive gentleness, never for a moment yielded; nor was she ever heard to express an angry or bitter sentiment. Still she was not without some consolation; she became the mother of promising children, on whom she could bestow the treasures of love and tenderness, of the value of which the dissolute Louis was insensible. Affliction now began to visit the French palace. Charles VI. had long shown evidences of a weak intellect. The events of his youth had shaken a mind never robust: indeed they were such as one can not read of even now without emotion.

During his long minority the country, which, under the prudent administration of his father, had well nigh recovered the defeats of Cressy and Poitiers, had been torn by intestine commotions. The regency was in the hands of the young king's uncles, the dukes of Anjou and Burgundy. The latter inheriting by his wife, who was heiress of Flanders, the rich provinces bordering France on the northeast, in addition

to his province of Burgundy, found himself, in some respects, more powerful than his sovereign. The commercial prosperity of the Low Countries filled his coffers with money, and the hardy Burgundian population gave him, at command, a bold and intrepid soldiery.

From his earliest years, Charles had manifested a passion for the chase. When about twelve years old, in the forest of Senlis, he had encountered a stag, bearing a collar with the inscription, "*Cæsar hoc mihi donavit.*" This wonderful stag appeared to him in a dream a few years afterward, as he lay in his tent before Roosebeke in Flanders, whither he had been led by his uncle of Burgundy to quell an insurrection of the citizens of Ghent, headed by the famous Philip van Artevelde. Great had been the preparations of the turbulent burghers. Protected by their massive armor, they formed themselves into a solid square bristling with pikes. The French cavalry, armed with lances, eagerly waited for the signal of attack. The signal was to be the unfurling of the oriflamme, the sacred banner of France, which had never before been displayed but when battling against infidels. It had been determined, on this occasion, to use it against the Flemings because they rejected the authority of Pope Clement, calling themselves Urbanists, and were consequently looked on by the French as excluded from the pale of the church. As the young king unfurled this formidable banner, the sun, which had for days been obscured by a lurid fog, suddenly shone forth with unwonted brilliancy. A dove, which had long hovered over the king's battalion, at the same time settled on the flag-staff.

"Now, by the lips of those you love, fair gentlemen of France,
Charge for the golden lilies—upon them with the lance!"

The French chivalry did indeed execute a memorable charge on these burghers of Ghent. Their lance points reached a yard beyond the heads of the Flemish pikes. The Flemings, unable to return or parry their thrusts, fell back on all sides. The immense central mass of human beings thus forcibly compressed, shrieked and struggled in vain. Gasping for breath, they perished, *en masse*, suffocated by the compression, and crushed under the weight of their heavy armor. A reward had been offered for the body of Philip van Artevelde: it was found amid a heap of slain, and brought to the king's pavilion. The young monarch gazed on the mortal remains of his foe, but no wound could be discovered on the body of the Flemish leader—he had perished from suffocation. The corpse was afterward hanged on the nearest tree. When the king surveyed this horrible yet bloodless field, the appalling spectacle of this mass of dead, amounting, it is said, to 34,000 corpses, was more than his mind could bear. From this period unmistakable evidences of his malady became apparent. The marvelous stag took possession of his fancy; it seemed to him the

emblem of victory, and he caused it to be introduced among the heraldic insignia of the kingdom.

In his sixteenth year, the king selected, as the partner of his throne, the beautiful Isabeau of Bavaria. She also was a Visconti by the mother's side, her father having wedded one of the daughters of Bernabos. In her honor various costly fêtes had been given. On one of these occasions the royal bridegroom displayed his eccentricity in a characteristic manner. The chroniclers of the time have given us very detailed accounts of these entertainments. The costumes were extravagantly fantastic: ladies carried on their head an enormous *hennin*, a very cumbersome kind of head-dress, surmounted by horns of such dimensions, that their exit or entrance into an apartment was a work of considerable difficulty. The shoes were equally absurd and inconvenient; their pointed extremities, half a yard in length, were turned up and fastened to the knees in various grotesque forms. The robes, the long open sleeves of which swept the ground, were emblazoned with strange devices. Among the personal effects of one of the royal princes we find an inventory of about a thousand pearls used in embroidering on a robe the words and music of a popular song.

The chronicle of the *Religieux de St. Denis* describes one of these masked balls, which was held in the court-yard of that venerable abbey, temporarily roofed over with tapestries for the occasion. The sons of the Duke of Anjou, cousins of the king, were prepared to invade Naples, in right of their father, to whom Joanna of Naples had devised that inheritance. Previous to their departure, their royal cousin resolved to confer on them the order of knighthood. An immense concourse of guests were invited to witness the splendid ceremony, and take part in the jousts and tournaments which were to follow. The king had selected a strange scene for these gay doings. The Abbey of St. Denis was the last resting-place of the kings of France. Here mouldered the mortal remains of his predecessors, and here were to repose his bones when he, too, should be "gathered to his fathers." The celebrated "Captain of the Companies," the famous du Guesclin, the saviour of France in the reign of his father, had paid the debt of nature many years before, and reposed there among the mortal remains of those whose throne he had guarded so well. The astonishment of the guests was extreme, when it appeared that the exhumation and reinterment of du Guesclin formed part of the programme of the revels. The old warrior was taken up, the funeral rites solemnly gone through, three hundred livres appropriated to the pious use of masses for his soul, and the revelers dismissed to meditate on the royal eccentricities.

The murder of the Constable of France, Oliver de Clisson, followed soon after, and quite completed the break down of poor Charles's mind. This powerful officer of the crown had long been feared and hated by the great feudal lords,

especially by the Duke of Brittany, who entertained an absurd jealousy of the one-eyed hero. Although Clisson, by his decisive victory at Auray, had secured to him the contested dukedom of Brittany, the jealous duke treacherously arrested his benefactor and guest, whom he kept prisoner in the dungeons of his castle of La Motte. In the first transports of his fury the duke had given orders that do Clisson should be put to death; but his servants, fearing the consequences of so audacious an act, left his commands unexecuted. Eventually, the Constable was permitted by his captor to purchase his freedom, a condition which was no sooner complied with, than the duke repented having allowed his foe to escape from his hands. He now suborned Pierre de Craon, a personal enemy of de Clisson, to be the executioner of his vengeance. The Constable was returning to his hotel, having spent a festive evening with his sovereign, when he was set on by his assassins. He fell, covered with wounds, and was left for dead. To increase his torments, the murderer announced to him, as he fell, his name and motives. But, though severely injured, Clisson was yet alive. The noise of the conflict reached the king, who was just retiring to rest. He hastened to the spot. His bleeding minister clung to his robe, and implored him to swear that he should be avenged.

"My fidelity to your majesty has raised up for me powerful enemies: this is my only crime. Whether I recover or perish from my wounds, swear to me that I shall not be unavenged."

"I shall never rest, so help me God," replied the excited monarch, "until the authors of this audacious crime shall be brought to justice."

Charles kept his word. Although suffering from fever, the result of this night's alarm and exposure, he collected a considerable army, and marched for Brittany. His impatient eagerness knew no bounds. Through the sultry, noonday heat, over the arid plains and dense forests of Brittany, he pursued the assassin of his Constable. He rode the foremost of his host; often silently and alone. One day, having undergone great personal fatigue, he had closed his eyes, still riding forward, when he was aroused by the violent curvetting of his steed, whose bridle had been seized by a wild-looking man, singularly clad.

"Turn back, turn back, noble king," cried he; "to proceed further is certain death, you are betrayed!" Having uttered these words, the stranger disappeared in the recesses of the forest before any one could advance to arrest him.

The army now traversed a sandy plain, which reflected the intensity of the solar rays. The king wore a black velvet jerkin, and a cap of crimson velvet, ornamented with a chaplet of pearls. This ill-selected costume rendered the heat insufferable. While musing on the strange occurrence in the forest, he was aroused by the clashing of steel around him. The page, who

bore his lance, had yielded to the drowsy influences of the oppressive noonday heat, and as he slumbered his lance had fallen with a ringing sound on the casque of the page before him. The succession of these alarms quite damaged Charles's intellect. He turned, in a paroxysm of madness, crying, "Down with the traitors!" and attacked his own body-guard. All made way, as the mad king assailed them. Several fell victims to his wildly-aimed thrusts, before he sunk at length, exhausted by his efforts, a fit of total insensibility followed. His brother of Orleans and kinsman of Burgundy had him conveyed by slow stages to Paris.

Charles's recovery was very tedious. Many remedies were tried—charms and incantations, as well as medicines; but to the great joy of the people, who had always loved him, his reason was at length pronounced to be restored, and his physicians recommended him to seek amusement and diversion in festive entertainments.

Another shock, and Charles VI. became a confirmed lunatic. This tragical termination of an absurd frolic occurred as follows:

On a gala occasion the monarch and five knights of his household conceived the design of disguising themselves as satyrs. Close-fitting linen dresses, covered with some bituminous substance, to which was attached fine flax resembling hair, were stitched on their persons. Their grotesque figures excited much merriment. The dukes of Orleans and Bar, who had been supping elsewhere, entered the hall somewhat affected by their night's dissipation. With inconceivable folly, one of these tipsy noblemen applied a torch to the covering of one of the satyrs. The miserable wretch, burning frightfully and hopelessly, rushed through the hall in horrible torments, shrieking in the agonies of despair. The fire was rapidly communicated. To those of the satyrs, whose hairy garments were thus ignited, escape was hopeless. To detach the flaming pitch was impossible; they writhed and rolled about, but in vain: their tortures only ended with their lives. One alone beside the king escaped. Recollecting that the huttery was near, he ran and plunged himself in the large tub of water provided for washing the plates and dishes. Even so, he did not escape without serious injuries. The king had been conversing in his disguise with the young bride of the duke of Berri. She had recognized him, and with admirable presence of mind and devotion, she held him fast, covering him with her robe lest a spark should descend on him. To her care and energy he owed his preservation from so horrible a fate; but, alas! only to linger for years a miserable maniac. The terrible spectacle of his companions in harmless frolic perishing in this dreadful manner before his eyes, completed the wreck of his already broken intellect. His reason returned but partially. Even these slight amendments were at rare intervals. He became a squalid and pitiable object; his person utterly neglected, for his garments could only be

changed by force. His heartless and faithless wife deserted him—indeed, in his insane fits his detestation of her was excessive—and neglected their children. One human being only could soothe and soften him, his sister-in-law, Valentina Visconti.

Charles had always manifested the truest friendship for the neglected wife of his brother. They were alike unhappy in their domestic relations; for the gallantries of the beautiful queen were scarcely less notorious than those of Louis of Orleans; and if scandal spoke truly, Louis himself was one of the queen's lovers. The brilliant and beautiful Isabeau was distinguished by the dazzlingly clear and fair complexion of her German fatherland, and the large lustrous eyes of the Italian. But Charles detested her, and delighted in the society of Valentina. He was never happy but when near her. In the violent paroxysms of his malady, she only could venture to approach him—she alone had influence over the poor maniac. He yielded to her wishes without opposition; and in his occasional glimpses of reason, touchingly thanked his "dear sister" for her watchful care and forbearance.

It must have been a dismal change, even from the barbaric court of Milan; but Valentina was not a stranger to the consolations which are ever the reward of those who prove themselves self-sacrificing in the performance of duty. She was eminently happy in her children. Charles, her eldest son, early evinced a delicate enthusiasm of mind—the sensitive organization of genius. He was afterward to become, *par excellence*, the poet of France. In his childhood he was distinguished for his amiable disposition and handsome person. Possibly at the time of which we now write, was laid the foundation of that sincere affection for his cousin Isabella, eldest daughter of the king, which many years afterward resulted in their happy union. One of the most touching poems of Charles of Orleans has been charmingly rendered into English by Mr. Carey. It is addressed to his deceased wife, who died in child-bed at the early age of twenty-two.

"To make my lady's obsequies,
My love a minster wrought,
And in the chantry, service there
Was sung by doleful thought.
The tapers were of burning sighs,
That light and odor gave,
And grief, illumined by tears,
Irradiated her grave;
And round about in quaintest guise
Was carved, 'Within this tomb there lies
The fairest thing to mortal eyes.'

"Above her lieth spread a tomb,
Of gold and sapphires blue;
The gold doth mark her blessedness,
The sapphire mark her true;
For blessedness and truth in her
Were lively portray'd,
When gracious God with both his hands
Her wondrous beauty made;
She was, to speak without disguise,
The fairest thing to mortal eyes.

"No more, no more; my heart doth faint,
When I the life recall
Of her who lived so free from taint,
So virtuous deemed by all;
Who in herself was so complete,
I think that she was taken
By God to deck his Paradise,
And with his saints to reign;
For well she doth become the skies,
Whom, while on earth, each one did prize,
The fairest thing to mortal eyes!"

The same delicate taste and sweet sensibility which are here apparent, break forth in another charming poem by Charles, composed while a prisoner in England, and descriptive of the same delightful season that surrounds us with light and harmony, while we write, "*le premier printemps*:"

"The Time hath laid his mantle by
Of wind, and rain, and icy chill,
And dons a rich embroidery
Of sunlight pour'd on lake and hill.

"No beast or bird in earth or sky,
Whose voice doth not with gladness thrill;
For Time hath laid his mantle by
Of wind, and rain, and icy chill.

"River and fountain, brook and rill,
Bespangled o'er with livery gay
Of silver droplets, wind their way:
All in their new apparel vie,
For Time hath laid his mantle by."

We have said little of Louis of Orleans, the unfaithful husband of Valentina. This young prince had many redeeming traits of character. He was generous, liberal, and gracious; adored by the French people; fondly loved, even by his neglected wife. His tragical death, assassinated in cold blood by his cousin, Jean-sans-peur of Burgundy, excited in his behalf universal pity. Let us review the causes which aroused the vindictive hostility of the Duke of Burgundy, only to be appeased by the death of his gay and unsuspecting kinsman.

Among the vain follies of Louis of Orleans, his picture-gallery may be reckoned the most offensive. Here were suspended the portraits of his various mistresses; among others he had the audacity to place there the likeness of the Bavarian princess, wife of Jean-sans-peur. The resentment of the injured husband may readily be conceived. In addition to this very natural cause of dislike, these dukes had been rivals for that political power which the imbecility of Charles the Sixth placed within their grasp.

The unamiable elements in the character of the Duke of Burgundy had been called into active exercise in very early life. While Duke de Noyers, he was defeated at Nicopolis, and made prisoner by Bajazet, surnamed "Ilderim," or the Thunderer. What rendered this defeat the more mortifying was, the boastful expectation of success proclaimed by the Christian army. "If the sky should fall, we could uphold it on our lances," they exclaimed, but a few hours before their host was scattered, and its leaders prisoners to the Moslem. Jean-sans-

peur was detained in captivity until an enormous ransom was paid for his deliverance. Giovanni-Galeazzo was suspected of connivance with Bnjazet, both in bringing the Christians to fight at a disadvantage, and in putting the Turks on the way of obtaining the heaviest ransoms. The splenetic irritation of this disaster seems to have clung long after to the Duke of Burgundy. His character was quite the reverse of that of his confiding kinsman of Orleans. He was subtle, ambitious, designing, crafty—dishonorably resorting to guile, where he dared not venture on overt acts of hostility. For the various reasons we have mentioned, he bore a secret but intense hatred to his cousin Louis.

In the early winter of 1407, the Duke of Orleans, finding his health impaired, made a temporary adieu to the capital, and secluded himself in his favorite chateau of Beauté. He seems to have been previously awakened to serious reflections. He had passed much of his time at the convent of the Celestines, who, among their most precious relics, still reckon the illuminated manuscript of the Holy Scriptures presented to them by Louis of Orleans, and bearing his autograph. To this order of monks he peculiarly attached himself, spending most of the time his approaching death accorded to him. A spectre, in the solitude of the cloisters, appeared to him, and bade him prepare to stand in the presence of his Maker. His friends in the convent, to whom he narrated the occurrence, contributed by their exhortations to deepen the serious convictions pressing on his mind. There now seemed a reasonable expectation that Louis of Orleans would return from his voluntary solitude at his chateau on the Marne, a wiser and a better man, cured, by timely reflection, of the only blemish which tarnished the lustre of his many virtues.

The aged Duke of Berri had long lamented the ill-feeling and hostility which had separated his nephews of Orleans and Burgundy. It was his earnest desire to see these discords, so injurious to their true interests and the well-being of the kingdom, ended by a cordial reconciliation. He addressed himself to Jean-sans-peur, and met with unhopd-for success. The Duke of Burgundy professed his willingness to be reconciled, and acceded with alacrity to his uncle's proposition of a visit to the invalided Louis. The latter, ever trusting and warm-hearted, cordially embraced his former enemy. They received the sacrament together, in token of peace and good-will: the Duke of Burgundy, accepting the proffered hospitality of his kinsman, promised to partake of a banquet to be given on this happy occasion by Louis of Orleans, a few days later.

During the interval the young duke returned to Paris. His sister-in-law, Queen Isabeau, was then residing at the Hotel Barbotte—a noble palace in a retired neighborhood, with fine gardens, almost completely secluded. Louis of Orleans, almost unattended, visited the queen, to

condole with her on the loss of her infant, who had survived its birth but a few days. While they were supping together, Seas de Courteheuze, valot-de-chambre to Charles VI., arrived with a message to the duke: "My lord, the king sends for you, and you must instantly hasten to him, for he has business of great importance to you and to him, which he must communicate to you this night." Louis of Orleans, never doubting that this message came from his brother, hastened to obey the summons. His inconsiderable escort rendered him an easy prey to the ruffians who lay in wait for him. He was cruelly murdered; his skull cleft open, the brains scattered on the pavement; his hand so violently severed from the body, that it was thrown to a considerable distance; the other arm shattered in two places; and the body frightfully mangled. About eighteen were concerned in the murder: Raoul d'Oquetonville and Seas de Courteheuze acted as leaders. They had long waited for an opportunity, and lodged at an hotel "having for sign the image of Our Lady," near the Porte Barbotte, where, it was afterward discovered, they had waited for several days for their victim. Thus perished, in the prime of life, the gay and handsome Louis of Orleans. The mutilated remains were collected, and removed to the Church of the Guillemins, the nearest place where they might be deposited. This confraternity were an order of hermits, who had succeeded to the church convent of the Blanc Manteau, instituted by St. Louis.

The church of the Guillemins was soon crowded by the friends and relatives of the murdered prince. All concurred in execrating the author or authors of this horrid deed. Suspicion at first fell upon Sir Aubert de Canny, who had good reason for hating the deceased duke. Louis of Orleans, some years previously, had carried off his wife, Marietta D'Enghein, and kept her openly until she had borne him a son, afterward the celebrated Dunois. Immediate orders were issued by the king for the arrest of the Knight of Canny. Great sympathy was felt for the widowed Valentina, and her young and fatherless children. No one expressed himself more strongly than the Duke of Burgundy. He sent a kind message to Valentina, begging her to look on him as a friend and protector. While contemplating the body of his victim, he said, "Never has there been committed in the realm of France a fouler murder." His show of regret did not end here: with the other immediate relatives of the deceased prince, he bore the pall at the funeral procession. When the body was removed to the church of the Celestines, there to be interred in a beautiful chapel Louis of Orleans had himself founded and built, Burgundy was observed by the spectators to shed tears. But he was destined soon to assume quite another character, by an almost involuntary act. The provost of Paris, having traced the flight of the assassins, had ascertained beyond doubt that they had taken refuge at

the hotel of this very Duke of Burgundy. He presented himself at the council, and undertook to produce the criminals, if permitted to search the residences of the princes. Seized with a sudden panic, the Duke of Burgundy, to the astonishment of all present, became his own accuser. Pale and trembling, he avowed his guilt: "It was I!" he faltered; "the devil tempted me!" The other members of the council shrunk back in undisguised horror. Jean-sans-peur, having made this astounding confession, left the council-chamber, and started, without a moment's delay, for the Flemish frontier. He was hotly pursued by the friends of the murdered Louis; but his measures had been taken with too much prompt resolution to permit of a successful issue to his Orleanist pursuers. Once among his subjects of the Low Countries, he might dare the utmost malice of his opponents.

In the mean time, the will of the deceased duke was made public. His character, like Caesar's, rose greatly in the estimation of the citizens, when the provisions of his last testament were made known. He desired that he should be buried without pomp in the church of the Celestines, arrayed in the garb of that order. He was not unmindful of the interests of literature and science; nor did he forget to make the poor and suffering the recipients of his bounty. Lastly, he confided his children to the guardianship of the Duke of Burgundy: thus evincing a spirit unmindful of injuries, generous, and confiding. This document also proved, that even in his wild career, Louis of Orleans was at times visited by better and holier aspirations.

Valentina mourned over her husband long and deeply; she did not long survive him; she sunk under her bereavement, and followed him to the grave ere her year of widowhood expired. At first the intelligence of his barbarous murder excited in her breast unwonted indignation. She exerted herself actively to have his death avenged. A few days after the murder, she entered Paris in "a litter covered with white cloth, and drawn by four white horses." All her retinue were deep mourning. She had assumed for her device the despairing motto:

"Rien ne m'est plus,
Plus ne m'est rien."

Proceeding to the Hôtel St. Pôl, accompanied by her children and the Princess Isabella, the affianced bride of Charles of Orleans, she threw herself at the king's knees, and, in a passion of tears, prayed for justice on the murderer of his brother, her lamented lord. Charles was deeply moved: he also wept aloud. He would gladly have granted her that justice which she demanded, had it been in his power to do so; but Burgundy was too powerful. The feeble monarch dared not offend his overgrown vassal. A process at law was all the remedy the king could offer.

Law was then, as now, a tedious and uncertain remedy, and a rich and powerful trav-

erser could weary out his prosecutor with delays and quibbles equal to our own. Jean-sans-peur returned in defiance to Paris to conduct the proceedings in his own defense. He had erected a strong tower of solid masonry in his hôtel; here he was secure in the midst of his formidable guards and soldiery. For his defense, he procured the services of Jean Petit, a distinguished member of the University of Paris, and a popular orator. The oration of Petit (which has rendered him infamous), was rather a philippic against Louis of Orleans, than a defense of Jean-sans-peur. He labors to prove that the prince deserved to die, having conspired against the king and kingdom. One of the charges—that of having, by incantations, endeavored to destroy the monarch—gives us a singular idea of the credulity of the times, when we reflect that these absurd allegations were seriously made and believed by a learned doctor, himself a distinguished member of the most learned body in France, the University of Paris. The Duke of Orleans conspired "to cause the king, our lord, to die of a disorder, so languishing and so slow, that no one should divine the cause of it; he, by dint of money, bribed four persons, an apostate monk, a knight, an esquire, and a varlet, to whom he gave his own sword, his dagger, and a ring, for them to consecrate to, or more properly speaking, to make use of, in the name of the devil," &c. "The monk made several incantations. . . . And one grand invocation on a Sunday, very early, and before sunrise on a mountain near to the tower of Mont-joy. . . . The monk performed many superstitious acts near a hush, with invocations to the devil; and while so doing he stripped himself naked to his shirt and kneeled down: he then struck the points of the sword and dagger into the ground, and placed the ring near them. Having uttered many invocations to the devils, two of them appeared to him in the shape of two men, clothed in brownish-green, one of whom was called Hermias, and the other Estramain. He paid them such honors and reverence as were due to God our Saviour—after which he retired behind the bush. The devil who had come for the ring took it and vanished, but he who was come for the sword and dagger remained—but afterward, having seized them, he also vanished. The monk, shortly after, came to where the devils had been, and found the sword and dagger lying flat on the ground, the sword having the point broken—but he saw the point among some powder where the devil had laid it. Having waited half-an-hour, the other devil returned and gave him the ring, which to the sight was of the color of red, nearly scarlet, and said to him: 'Thou wilt put it into the mouth of a dead man in the manner thou knowest,' and then he vanished."

To this oration the advocate of the Duchess of Orleans replied at great length. Valentina's answer to the accusation we have quoted, was concise and simple. "The late duke, Louis of Orleans, was a prince of too great piety and

virtue to tamper with sorceries and witchcraft." The legal proceedings against Jean-sans-peur seemed likely to last for an interminable period. Even should they be decided in favor of the family of Orleans, the feeble sovereign dared not carry the sentence of the law into execution against so powerful an offender as the Duke of Burgundy. Valentina knew this; she knew also that she could not find elsewhere one who could enforce her claims for justice—justice on the murderer of her husband—the slayer of the father of her defenseless children. Milan, the home of her girlhood, was a slaughter-house, reeking with the blood of her kindred. Five years previously her father, Giovanni-Galeazzo Visconti, had died of the plague which then desolated Italy. To avoid this terrible disorder he shut himself up in the town of Marignano, and amused himself during his seclusion by the study of judicial astrology, in which science he was an adept. A comet appeared in the sky. The haughty Visconti doubted not that this phenomenon was an announcement to him of his approaching death. "I thank God," he cried, "that this intimation of my dissolution will be evident to all men: my glorious life will be not ingloriously terminated." The event justified the omen.

By his second marriage with Katharina Visconti, daughter of his uncle Bernabos, Giovanni Galeazzo left two sons, still very young, Giovanni-Maria and Philippo-Maria, among whom his dominions were divided, their mother acting as guardian and regent.

All the ferocious characteristics of the Visconti seemed to be centred in the stepmother of Valentina. The Duchess of Milan delighted in executions; she beheaded, on the slightest suspicions, the highest nobles of Lombardy. At length she provoked reprisals, and died the victim of poison. Giovanni-Maria, nurtured in blood, was the worthy son of such a mother. His thirst for blood was unquenchable; his favorite pursuit was to witness the torments of criminals delivered over to bloodhounds, trained for the purpose, and fed only on human flesh. His huntsman and favorite, Squarcia Giramo, on one occasion, for the amusement of his master, threw to them a young boy only twelve years of age. The innocent child clung to the knees of the duke, and entreated that he might be preserved from so terrible a fate. The bloodhounds hung back. Squarcia Giramo seizing the child, with his hunting-knife cut his throat, and then flung him to the dogs. More merciful than these human monsters, they refused to touch the innocent victim.

Facino Cane, one of the ablest generals of the late duke, compelled the young princes to admit him to their council, and submit to his management of their affairs; as he was childless himself, he permitted them to live, stripped of power, and in great penury. To the sorrow and dismay of the Milanese, they saw this salutary check on the ferocious Visconti about to be removed by the death of Facino Cane. Determ-

ined to prevent the return to power of the young tyrant, they attacked and massacred Giovanni-Maria in the streets of Milan. While this tragedy was enacting, Facino Cane breathed his last.

Philippo-Maria lost not a moment in causing himself to be proclaimed duke. To secure the fidelity of the soldiery, he married, without delay, the widow of their loved commander. Beatrice di Tenda, wife of Facino Cane, was an old woman, while her young bridegroom was scarcely twenty years of age: so ill-assorted a union could scarcely be a happy one. Philippo-Maria, the moment his power was firmly secured, resolved to free himself from a wife whose many virtues could not compensate for her want of youth and beauty. The means to which he resorted were atrocious: he accused the poor old duchess of having violated her marriage vow, and compelled, by fear of the torture, a young courtier, Michel Orombelli, to become her accuser. The duke, therefore, doomed them both to be beheaded. Before the fatal blow of the executioner made her his victim, Beatrice di Tenda eloquently defended herself from the calumnies of her husband and the base and trembling Orombelli. "I do not repine," she said, "for I am justly punished for having violated, by my second marriage, the respect due to the memory of my deceased husband; I submit to the chastisement of heaven; I only pray that my innocence may be made evident to all; and that my name may be transmitted to posterity pure and spotless."

Such were the sons of Giovanni-Galeazzo Visconti, the half-brothers of the gentle Valentina of Orleans. When she sank broken-hearted into an early grave—her husband unavenged, her children unprotected—she felt how hopeless it would be to look for succor or sympathy to her father's house; yet her last moments were passed in peace. Her maternal solicitude for her defenseless orphans was soothed by the conviction that they would be guarded and protected by one true and faithful friend. Their magnanimous and high-minded mother had attached to them, by ties of affection and gratitude more strong, more enduring than those of blood, one well fitted by his chivalrous nature and heroic bravery to defend and shelter the children of his protectress. Dunois—"the young and brave Dunois"—the bastard of Orleans, as he is generally styled, was the illegitimate son of her husband. Valentina, far from slighting the neglected boy, brought him home to her, nurtured and educated him with her children, cherishing him as if he had indeed been the son of her bosom. If the chronicles of the time are to be believed, she loved him more fondly than her own offspring. "My noble and gallant boy," she would say to him, "I have been robbed of thee; it is thou that art destined to be thy father's avenger; wilt thou not, for my sake, who have loved thee so well, protect and cherish these helpless little ones?"

Long years after the death of Valentina the

vengeance of heaven did overtake Jean-sans-peur of Burgundy: he fell the victim of treachery such as he had inflicted on Louis of Orleans; but the cruel retaliation was not accomplished through the instrumentality or connivance of the Orleanists: Dunois was destined to play a far nobler part. The able seconder of Joan of Arc—the brave defender of Orleans against the besieging English host—he may rank next to his illustrious countrywoman, “La Pucelle,” as the deliverer of his country from foreign foes. His bravery in war was not greater than his disinterested devotion to his half-brothers. Well and nobly did he repay to Valentina, by his unceasing devotion to her children, her tender care of his early years. Charles of Orleans, taken prisoner by the English at the fatal battle of Agincourt, was detained for the greater part of his life in captivity: his infant children were unable to maintain their rights. Dunois reconquered for them their hereditary rights, the extensive appanages of the house of Orleans. They owed every thing to his sincere and watchful affection.

Valentina's short life was one of suffering and trial; but she seems to have issued from the furnace of affliction “purified seven times.” In the midst of a licentious court and age, she shines forth a “pale pure star.” Her spotless fame has never been assailed. Piety, purity, and goodness, were her distinguishing characteristics. She was ever a self-sacrificing friend, a tender mother, a loving and faithful wife. Her gentle endurance of her domestic trials recalls to mind the character of one who may almost be styled her contemporary, the “patient Griselda,” so immortalized by Chaucer and Boccaccio. Valentina adds another example to the many which history presents for our contemplation, to show that suffering virtue, sooner or later, meets with its recompense, even in this life. The broken-hearted Duchess of Orleans became the ancestress of two lines of French sovereigns, and through her the kings of France founded their claims to the Duchy of Milan. Her grandson, Louis the Twelfth, the “father of his people,” was the son of the poet Duke of Orleans. On the extinction of male heirs to this elder branch, the descendant of her younger son, the Duke of Angoulême, ascended the throne as Francis the First. Her great-grand-daughter was the mother of Alphonso, Duke of Ferrara, the “magnanimo Alfonso” of the poet Tasso. His younger sister, Leonora, will ever be remembered as the beloved one of the great epic poet of Italy—the ill-starred Torquato Tasso.

The mortal remains of Valentina repose at Blois; her heart is buried with her husband, in the church of the Celestines at Paris. Over the tomb was placed the following inscription:

“Cy gist Loys Duc D'Orleans.
Lequel sur tons duez terriens,
Fut le plus noble en son vivant
Mais ung qui vult aller devant,
Par envye le feist mourir.”

M. N.